

FLINT JOURNAL (MI)

1 February 1986

MSU needs more in state funding – DiBiaggio

By SHEILA BEACHUM
Journal education writer

John A. DiBiaggio has been a tireless crusader for Michigan State University since his installment as president last July.

As MSU's 17th president, DiBiaggio said he has spent his first months on the job crisscrossing the state and getting to know people — legislators, business and community leaders.

Friday, DiBiaggio brought to Flint his creed of MSU's commitment to academic excellence, and a message that the university cannot continue to be underfunded if the state is to make the complete comeback it deserves.

In an interview before his address to the Flint Rotary Club, DiBiaggio said Gov. James J. Blanchard's proposed 5.5-percent increase in state funding to higher education is not enough.

"We (MSU) need more than that, clearly," DiBiaggio said.

Still, he said, Blanchard must be admired for his proposed budget increases for education and prisons in the face of other demands on the state's limited financial resources.

MSU, with 41,000 students, has nearly a \$6-million budget, almost half of which is state funded.

THE UNIVERSITY needs to make its faculty salaries more competitive and to increase funding for lab equipment, support personnel and computerization, DiBiaggio told the Rotarians.

He called Blanchard's college tuition savings proposal an interesting idea that needs to be flushed out.

Under the proposal, parents would pay a lump sum to the state in exchange for a certificate worth four years of free tuition for their children in any of the state's public universities or colleges.

He said MSU and the University of Michigan have a healthy rivalry.

"MICHIGAN STATE needs U. of M. U. of M. needs Michigan State. And the people of the state need us both," DiBiaggio said.

Although MSU is preparing to embark on a significant fund-raising campaign, he said, the university should not expect private donations to compensate for underfunding at the state level.

MSU, the first land-grant university in the world, still is a model for land-grant universities, which are dedicated to "teaching, research and programs, all with one purpose —

public service," DiBiaggio said.

On other matters, DiBiaggio said:

● Gramm-Rudman, the federal budget deficit-cutting law, is outrageous.

The effect on student aid would be devastating. Students with the greatest need would receive help, but it puts more burden back on the state and individual students.

● MSU will continue its longtime commitment to general, or a liberal arts, education. There remain some glitches. For example, DiBiaggio believes there should be a foreign language requirement at MSU.

● MSU basketball coach Jud Heathcote "genuinely feels (star player Scott A.) Skiles is ready to be rehabilitated." Skiles has been arrested twice on drunken driving charges and was found guilty last year of marijuana possession. Skiles now awaits a court date.

DiBiaggio acknowledged, "It has caused us a bit of embarrassment."

● The university should not try to block a math professor from receiving a grant from the CIA for computerization. "If it doesn't violate our guidelines, why not (accept the grant)?"

A group of MSU faculty opposed taking money from the CIA because of its clandestine activities.